The Duke's arms tightened. "I do not understand, my lovely one. Tell me what this is all about. I am becoming more and more bewildered, but at the same time, more and more sure that you are the only person in the whole world who can make me happy."

As if he could not help himself, he turned her face up to his and kissed her again. This time his kisses were fierce and demanding. She felt as if she melted into him and was a part of him. They were no longer two people, but one. She knew her heart was beating frantically, and the Duke's was too. She thought nothing could be more perfect than their love. As she had longed to do, she was touching the stars.

Then as the Duke raised his head, she came down to earth. "Now tell me my darling one, whatever it is, and we can face it together."

Luella turned her face against him. Because she knew she had to tell him what he wanted to know she said in a small voice: "I . . I told you that Papa . . after he left Oxford . . wrote articles for the . . Royal Geographical Society. He was twenty-four years old, when they asked him to do a special one about . . Windsor Castle."

She paused as she felt the Duke kiss her hair and it sent a little thrill through her. With an effort she forced herself to go on: "It was when he was there . . and Queen Victoria gave him permission to . . stay in the Castle . . that he met by chance . . one of Her Majesty's guests."

Luella was aware that the Duke was now listening intently as she continued: "The Queen had . . sent for Princess Stephanie of Sweden to come to England

because she . . wished her to marry one of Prince Albert's relations . . a member of . . the Saxe-Coburg family."

"I think I can guess where this story is leading!" the Duke exclaimed.

"They met . . two or three times . . and . . fell in love with each other."

"Go on," the Duke said with his lips against her forehead.

"Because they . . knew that the . . Queen would . . never for . . one minute consider . . allowing Princess Stephanie to . . marry Papa . . they decided what they . . must . . do."

"They eloped!" the Duke exclaimed.

"Y.yes . . they ran away in the middle of the night and went to Tilbury . . There they boarded the first . . ship that was . . due to put to . . sea . . and once they were . . out in the ocean . . they asked . . the Captain to . . marry them."

"I think that was very romantic," the Duke said.

"The ship they boarded . . happened to be going to India," Luella went on. "That was in the days before the . . Suez Canal was opened . . and it took them weeks and weeks to get there." Her voice was very soft and she continued: "Mama always said it was like . . being in Heaven being . . alone with Papa . . and knowing that . . no one could . . find them . . or reproach them for . . what they had done."

"They were not found?" the Duke asked.

"No, not then," Luella answered. "When they reached India they moved from place to place, going up to the Himalayas and into Nepal."